

Diana Balbar Biography

Diana is an active community volunteer and has improved rural living with her efforts. ARAS has named a scholarship after Diana: a \$1,000 award given annually to a deserving youth who exemplifies volunteerism. Diana Balbar moved to Strathcona County (SC) in 1977. She began putting down roots in the Ministik area in 1980, acquiring a 40-acre parcel of land, and establishing a small outdoor stable to teach beginners to ride horses. Joining the local community league was a great way to meet people, and before long she was a contributing member of all three local halls – South Cooking Lake, Ministik, and Hastings Lake.

Over the years she drove a school bus to Ministik and Fultonvale schools, and transit in Sherwood Park, but her dream job came with the SC Library, running the Bookmobile service in the rural area. What could be better than driving down country roads, meeting great people, and sharing her love of reading? It was natural for the library-on-wheels to join community-hosted events like parades, but the ties became much stronger. The library depended on community halls as the 'bricks and mortar' of their rural service; halls offered wonderful places to program and provide services where rural residents already gathered. Through her work with the library, Diana was also able to advocate for the needs of the rural area. One of her dreams was to acquire a truly accessible low-floor Bookmobile, which became a reality in 2010. With that, everyone – those with wheelchairs and walkers, children and seniors – could enter with ease, and mobile services could be delivered to senior centres and preschools.

An unexpected bonus was Shell Canada's sponsorship of \$300,000 which enabled the library to improve rural service enormously. Equipment was purchased to improve participation in rural events, new collections and services were added, and additional mobile shelving and seating made the Bookmobile even more flexible, functional, and enjoyable. Funds were also used to establish free 24/7 hot spots at seven halls in areas where access to high-speed internet was very limited. This initiative grew when the library partnered with the county in the Rural High-Speed Internet Improvement Project; free Internet access is now available in every hall and seniors' centre in SC.

Diana and her team of volunteers from Bell Bar Ranch have provided musical ride performances at South Cooking Lake Trail Days, along with free pony rides at local events. Diana encouraged young volunteers to take part in the library's community activities as well. Youth could be found at many events, helping children with crafts on the Bookmobile at "Christmas in the Heartland," helping adults learn Spanish for "Hola" at Antler Lake, running games at the Ardrossan Parade and Picnic, and dressing up for parades. Diana's ties to Ministik School were particularly strong. Her daughter grew up in the rich community-based culture of Ministik. Janine encouraged her mother to start teaching social dance there, which became a wonderful volunteer job teaching children the joy of dancing that lasted 27 years!

Diana continues to volunteer her time primarily for ARAS, South Cooking Lake Community League, and the Los Villas/Patricia Glen community. She says the best thing about volunteering is the enduring friendships that develop along the way.

Award

In recognition of Diana Balbar's valuable contribution to the community through volunteerism as well as her efforts in promoting youth volunteerism, ARAS is proud to offer \$1,000 annually (as part of a 12-year program). Diana volunteers in many communities throughout rural Strathcona County and the common thread is that you will always find youth volunteering with her. Diana believes that mentoring youth to find ways to add value to their communities, will in turn help them find their own strengths, as well as foster confidence in their own abilities, which will last a lifetime. Diana also champions literacy through her work with the Strathcona County Library's Bookmobile.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for this scholarship, students must be either entering post-secondary, or currently enrolled in any year of an accredited program, degree, or diploma. There is no age restriction for applicants. Applicants may re-apply annually; however only one successful application per individual will be awarded. Educational programs related to agriculture are desirable. You will be asked how your educational program might benefit the agricultural/rural community. Unsuccessful applicants are invited to reapply in subsequent years provided they still meet the eligibility requirements.

Selection criteria

ARAS would like to honor individual efforts in volunteerism and community involvement. Selection will be based on applicants' community involvement. In order to be eligible, ARAS will require a minimum of 8 volunteer hours logged with the society in the given calendar year. Volunteer hours must be submitted and sign off by the ARAS board of directors (see attached form). We invite any additional volunteer efforts to be included with the application for our panel's consideration. Selection will also be based on these criteria, as well as answers provided in the questionnaire (see below).

Prerequisites

Proof of enrollment will be required prior to award of scholarship monies. Only the successful applicant will be requested to provide proof of enrollment in their respective accredited program, degree, or diploma.

References

Two letters of reference are required with application. References may be from teachers, coaches, mentors, community leaders, etc.

Questionnaire

In an effort to get to know our applicants, we have created a series of questions. Please provide candid responses to each. Answers will be reviewed by our panel.

Deadline – October 1, 2023

Application deadline is October 1, 2023. Submissions will be reviewed in October; the successful applicant will be contacted in early November and be requested to provide their proof of enrollment.

Application Info

Date _____
Application _____

Applicant Info

Name _____
Date of Birth _____
Address _____
City/Prov _____ Postal Code _____
Phone _____ Alt Phone _____
Email _____

Parent/Guardian Info *(if under the age of majority)*

Name(s) _____
Address _____
City/Prov _____ Postal Code _____
Phone _____ Alt Phone _____
Email _____

Volunteer Statistics *(please complete supplemental volunteer hour log)*

ARAS hours (2022)	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<8 Hrs	<input type="checkbox"/>	>8 Hrs
Other hours (2022)	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<8 Hrs	<input type="checkbox"/>	>8 Hrs

Enrollment Info

Institution _____
Name the Institution you plan to attend, or are currently attending

Program _____
Example: B.Sc. Agriculture

Type _____
Example: Certificate, Diploma, Degree

Status Application Submitted Conditional Acceptance Accepted Currently Enrolled

Length _____ Entering Year _____
Length of Program Enrolled In Current Year

Academic History

Educational Institutions Attended:

Name of School	Diploma/Certificate/Degree	Year Completed

Example: Ardrossan Jr. Sr. High School

Example: Grade 12 Diploma

Example: 2020

FOIP

Protection of Privacy - The personal information requested on this form is collected under the authority of Section 33 (c) of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be protected under Part 2 of that Act. It will be used for the purpose of evaluating potential recipients of the Diana Balbar Scholarship. Direct any questions about this collection to: ARAS Board of Directors, 60 First Ave, Ardrossan, AB T8E 2A2, (780) 699-1150

Questionnaire

In an effort to get to know our applicants, we have created a series of questions. Please provide candid responses to each. Answers will be reviewed by our panel.

Volunteerism – please answer all

What does Volunteerism and Community Involvement mean to you? (200 words max)

How do you incorporate Volunteerism into your everyday life? (100 words max)

What do you believe is the largest contributing factor regarding volunteer apathy, and how would you attract/engage new volunteers? (100 words max)

If you were granted unlimited resources to lead your own initiative within our community, what project do you dream of? *(100 words max)*

Application

Please elaborate how you will apply your education towards supporting the agricultural community. *(100 words max)*

Bonus – please select one of the following questions and provide a response

- Think of your past and describe one of your favorite memories of reading/being read to. How has this impacted your life? *(200 words max)*
- What was the book you wanted re-read until the pages fell apart as a child, and why? *(200 words max)*
- If you could be a character from any of the books you have read, what character would that be, and why? *(200 words max)*
- If you were to be trapped in a story forever, what story would that be, and why? *(200 words max)*
- What is the most impactful thing you have ever read? (Fiction or Non-Fiction – please feel free to include direct quotes) *(200 words max)*

Volunteer Log

ARAS Volunteer Hours

Date	Event/Description of Duties Performed	Supervisor	Hours

Other Volunteer Hours – *please list any additional volunteer efforts here*

Date	Event/Description of Duties Performed	Supervisor	Hours

Letters of Reference *(please include letters of reference following this page)*

Summary

Checklist of Attachments:

- Application Form
- Questionnaire
- Volunteer Log (record of hours)
- Two Letters of Reference (*may be from teachers, coaches, community leaders, etc.*)
- Proof of Enrollment (*only the successful applicant will be requested to provide*)

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL DOCUMENTS (AS A SINGLE PDF) TO:

Email: aras.dianabalbarscholarship@gmail.com

Subject: *Diana Balbar Scholarship – Year – Name of Applicant*

REFERENCE: <https://www.ardrossanrecagsociety.ca/>

